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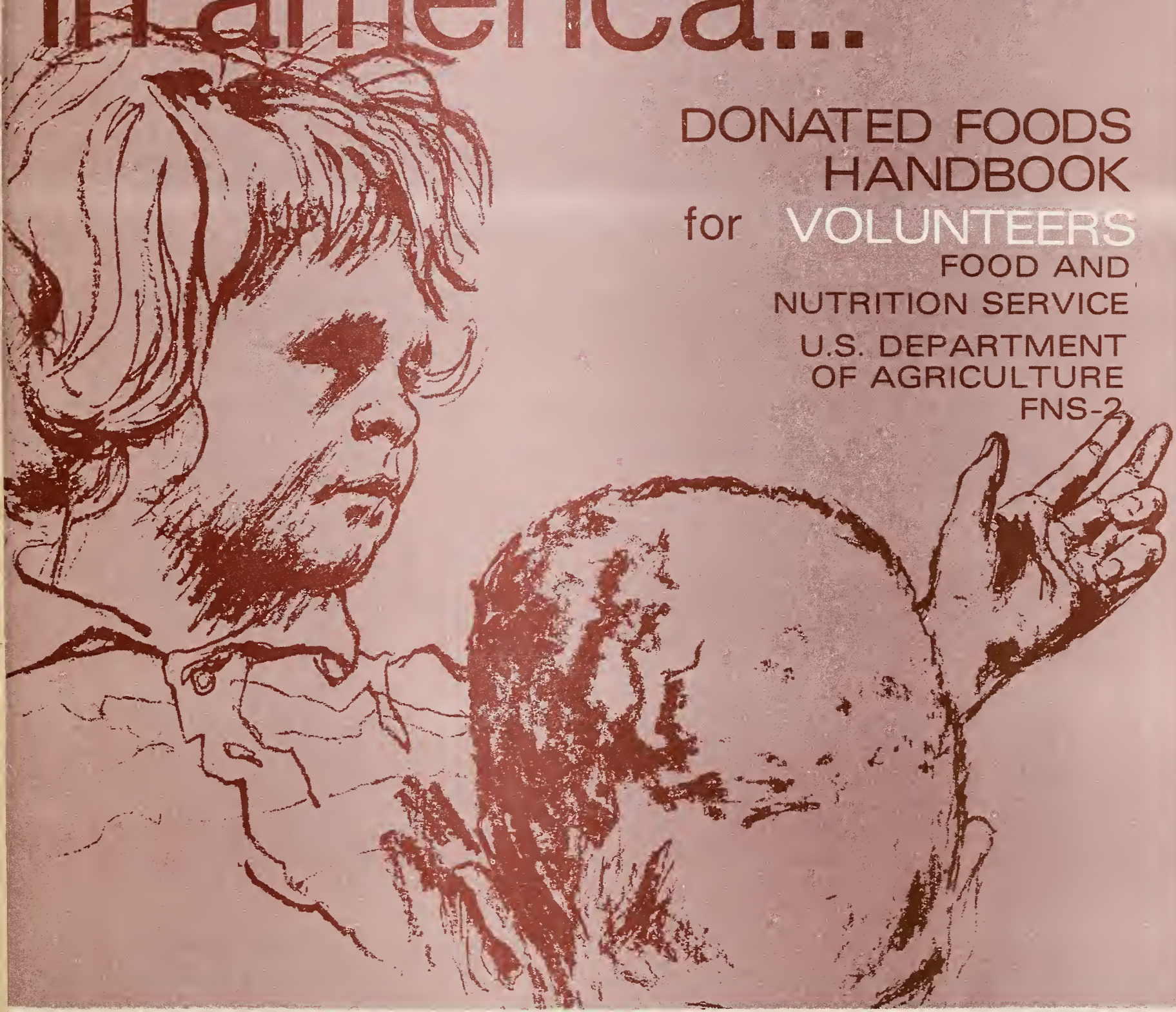
DONATED FOODS
HANDBOOK

for VOLUNTEERS

FOOD AND
NUTRITION SERVICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

FNS-2



VOLUNTEERS AGAINST HUNGER

You and your neighbors have an important role in the campaign to end hunger and malnutrition in America. By helping low-income people get and make good use of the food help available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, you can contribute greatly to the lives of disadvantaged families in your area and thus to the life of the entire community.

American farmers produce plenty of food to provide every American with an adequate diet. The problem is to get it to all low-income people who need it—especially the aging, the disabled, growing children, mothers, and unemployed workers.

For most poor people, food help is close at hand, right in their own communities. All but a few counties and cities have in operation either USDA's Food Stamp Program to enable low-income people to buy more food at their local stores, or the Family Food Donation Program which provides a variety of nutritious foods for local distribution to poor families. The goal is to have these programs available to people in every corner of the Nation.

Another part of the problem is to extend the reach and improve the effectiveness of family food programs in communities where they are already operating. Many poor people are not getting the benefits they should from food help now available to them. Whether it's because of fear, suspicion, lack of motivation, lack of transportation, or physical handicaps—there is usually an identifiable reason. A reason that can often be dealt with by concerned citizens of good will who can lend a helping hand.

Many individuals and private organizations have asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture what they can do to help, and many are already conducting well-planned service projects to help reach low-income people with the food assistance they need for better diets and better health.

This handbook is to help you work with the Family Food Donation Program and "Foods for Health," the Supplemental Food Program that helps mothers, infants, and young children get better nutrition. There are challenging opportunities for local groups to contribute leadership and service.

GETTING STARTED

You can make a valuable contribution to ending hunger and malnutrition in your own community, by working either as an individual or as part of a group. But first, find out all about the food donation program and what others may already be doing. Here are some ideas for getting started:

1. Get in touch with the local welfare department to find out about operations of the food donation program, when and where the foods are distributed and what volunteers can do to help. The telephone number of the public welfare department is listed in the same place as other offices of your local government in the telephone directory.
2. If possible visit the distribution center on the day the donated food is given out.
3. Find out what other volunteers are doing to help. You can get leads from:
 - The local welfare and health departments.
 - The listing of social service organizations in the yellow pages of your telephone directory.
 - The County Extension Service. The telephone number should be listed along with other offices of local government.
 - Clergymen and other church leaders, nurses, teachers, Head Start and Community Action Program leaders.
4. Make personal visits to volunteer activities to get a first-hand view and find out what additional help may be needed.
5. If you decide on a project that's new for your community, consider these questions:
 - What support can you get from others, including local officials and leaders of voluntary groups?
 - How does your project tie in with what other groups are doing?
 - Will there be overlap or duplication?
6. Find out if your area has a training program for volunteers. Is there a system to coordinate and direct their efforts? Can it be used for volunteers helping with food programs? In many counties and cities the welfare department assigns a staff member to work with volunteers so their activities will complement the work of the professionals. Major voluntary organizations also have training programs. Whatever the approach, there needs to be a way to provide information, guidance and direction to volunteers.

VOLUNTEER ROLES

In general, volunteers and community organizations can be most effective by devoting their capabilities and resources to activities that fit into five major inter-related categories:

- OUTREACH
 - DIRECT HELP
 - FOOD EDUCATION
 - MONEY
 - COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Here are some of the activities that might be undertaken, along with examples of service projects that individuals and groups in different parts of the country are already carrying out. These are to help you get started. From there on, your own experience, ingenuity and imagination will suggest new approaches suited to the needs of the people in your community.

Outreach

In Tappahanock, Va., a newswoman volunteer visits hospital patients suffering from health problems related to poor diet and helps them apply for donated foods.

The Salvation Army distributes flyers along with their food basket to the needy, telling how to get on the regular food help program.

Telling low-income families about donated foods and where to get them is an important part of the job. Many don't apply because they don't know about the program or don't think they would be eligible. Others don't understand how to get the necessary papers together to take to the application office.

Community groups can help get the word out by distributing easy-to-read flyers and by talking to people who might need food help. They can make door-to-door canvasses in public housing projects, arrange to visit families on public assistance, get information to ministers, employment services, health clinics and other places people gather.

Direct Help

In Gibson County, Tenn., the Jaycees help families get to the distribution center and home again, with their donated foods. Others giving this kind of help include the B'nai B'rith of Columbus, Georgia; the Georgia Council on Human Relations; Community Action Program Volunteers in Connecticut; an Atlanta minister; an Atlanta attorney's wife. Two Dallas homemakers help transport food for about a dozen different families each month.

In San Diego, Calif., voluntary organizations joined forces to help the local government start the family food donation program in their city. Local storage space, equipment and even staff for the distribution center are provided by the Salvation Army, three local churches, a neighborhood house, Economic Opportunity Center and an emergency welfare organization.

A poor family who has to go across town and pick up a month's supply of food weighing 150 pounds or more may not get there without assistance. A mother with small children, who receives an order for supplemental foods at the health center, may not be able to get the extra food home unless someone helps her.

For many, especially the elderly, the sick and disabled, transportation is crucial. It sometimes makes the difference between getting food help and going without. Those who don't know where to go or how to apply for food help need someone to help them get to the application office.

In Arizona, the League for Economic Advancement of Phoenix delivers donated foods to the infirm, aged, and others who can't get to the distribution centers. And in rural locations, another group transports food to people in mountainous areas.

In Elbow Lake, Minn., the auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars helps distribute food at the distribution center.

Community organizations can often make things run smoother at the office where applications are taken or at the distribution center where donated foods are given out. They serve coffee and cookies to applicants waiting to be interviewed and help baby-sit with small children while their mothers are applying for the program. Where local public funds are short, voluntary organizations can help furnish, equip, and staff the distribution center. They also could help operate a mobile center to reach people in outlying areas.

Food Education

A Florida cookbook author and volunteer gives weekly food demonstrations showing how to use donated foods at a neighborhood center program that also involves the VISTA volunteers, the Girl Scouts, OEO Community Action staff, social workers, home economics teachers and students, the local employment service, and the legal aid society—all helping to extend the reach of the educational effort.

A 4-H Club teenager adopted foods as her community service project, learned how to prepare certain basic dishes, invited low-income homemakers to taste test her results and shared her recipes and menu ideas for donated foods.

A restaurant worker employs her kitchen skills on her days off, helping other donated food users learn to prepare appetizing, low-cost meals.

People getting donated foods must know how to plan meals and prepare food that their families will like if they are going to make any improvement in their diets. While many recipients are skilled and imaginative in using donated foods, there are others who do not know what food their families should eat or how to prepare it.

Simple demonstrations with samples to taste at the distribution center, at clinics or neighborhood centers can go a long way toward reassuring people that the food they're getting is good and that they can prepare it tastily. Simple flyers and illustrated recipes—which are available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture—can be given out. People using donated foods can be encouraged to exchange ideas with each other, perhaps organize a neighborhood food club. Most communities have professional home economists—teachers, extension agents, nutritionists, dietitians—who might be enlisted to help with an educational project. The local official in charge of the program can provide samples of donated foods for use in demonstrations and teaching programs.

Money

Voluntary organizations can help to finance emergency food delivery to destitute families, food demonstrations and classes, printing educational materials and flyers explaining program benefits to potential recipients, and improvements in the appearance and furnishings at the distribution center. In rural areas funds could be applied to establishing a mobile food distribution center or some kind of delivery system for people in remote areas.

Community Support

A community campaign against malnutrition can grow and expand only if it catches attention and enjoys public support. Concerned citizens can write to their local editors of their interest and determination to support and expand the food donation programs. They can alert local press, radio and TV to progress and news of local voluntary services. They can talk to local officials if they feel improvements are needed in food program operations and facilities. They can enlist the support of other community leaders and organizations.

THE FAMILY FOOD DONATION PROGRAM

Foods donated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service are given free to low-income families who cannot afford to buy all the food they need. The foods are sent to counties, towns and cities all over the country taking part in the Commodity Distribution Program, who in turn give the foods to poor families in their communities.

Over 20 nutritious foods are currently available for donation. The list includes canned meat and poultry, peanut butter, dry beans, instant mashed potatoes, nonfat dry milk, canned fruits and vegetables, table and cooking fats, flour, cornmeal, rice and other cereals, raisins or other dried fruit.

The Food and Nutrition Service offers State and local agencies enough food to supply each person in the donation program over 30 pounds a month. These foods meet Federal specifications for wholesomeness and are at least equal in quality to the foods available in regular retail stores. Donated foods are fortified and enriched with vitamins and minerals as appropriate. If donated foods are distributed at the rates recommended by USDA, and accepted and used by recipients, they can provide a diet that comes very close to meeting full nutritional needs. These foods can supply all the family's protein, calcium, thiamine, riboflavin, and substantial amounts of needed iron, plus Vitamins A, C, and D.

Several factors affect a family's chances of actually getting all the nutritional benefits possible from donated foods. Among them are:

- * The State and local agencies' capability to handle and store all the food USDA offers.

- * Getting the family to know about donated foods, to make application, and then to get the foods home.

- * The family's understanding of how to eat well, how to prepare and serve donated foods.

The voluntary efforts of concerned individuals and organizations can do much to maximize the benefits that families receive from the donated foods program.

To be considered eligible for these free foods, a family or individual needs to have a place to cook and have an income so low that they cannot buy all the food they need. Recipients include the unemployed, those with part-time work, those who work for very low wages, families on public welfare, people on Social Security or with very small pensions.

To find out about getting donated food, the head of the family goes to the local welfare office and brings with him papers to show where the family lives, how many people are in the family, how much income they have each month, how much they pay for doctor bills and rent.

The welfare office determines whether the family is eligible to receive donated foods, using standard rules, based on family income and resources and related to State and local welfare standards. Once the family is found eligible, they are given an identification card, which they take to the distribution center to get their foods. Most localities distribute donated foods once a month, but some distribute more often. Others have mobile distribution systems to reach widely scattered neighborhoods. Every family is offered amounts and kinds of food, based on family size and age—a family of four may get 120 pounds of food. They don't have to take all the foods offered, but they should be encouraged to take all they can use for maximum nutritional and economic benefits.

Costs and responsibility for operating the Food Donation Program are shared by Federal, State and local governments. USDA buys and contracts for packaging the foods from commercial suppliers. USDA experts check all the foods to make sure they meet Federal specifications and quality standards. Then, based on orders from the States, food is shipped to points within participating States at Federal expense.

State and local governments pay costs of storing and transporting the foods within the State, interviewing and certifying applicants for the program and distributing the foods. Local costs of operating this family food program should average about 10 percent of the value of food donated.

The Department of Agriculture also donates food to schools and non-profit institutions, usually through the same State office responsible for the family food donation program.

If there is no food help program in your county and you want to ask about starting one, you can begin by talking to the local welfare department. Also, you can get more information about the food donation or food stamp program by contacting the Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office nearest you. Addresses are inside back cover.

SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM

For the first time, food and health care have been linked together in a program for an especially vulnerable group—expectant and nursing mothers, infants, and young children in low-income families. USDA's Supplemental Food Program is a way to help young children and infants get nutritious foods necessary for early growth and mental development, and to maintain expectant and nursing mothers' health.

Doctors at clinics and health centers write out orders for the kinds and amounts of special foods that mothers, infants, and young children need added to their diets to grow healthy and strong. The doctor may appoint someone who works in the clinic or health center to give these food orders for him. The Program can run in any community even if they don't have USDA's Food Stamp Program or the Commodity Distribution Program.

The foods given are ones that mothers-to-be, mothers with babies, and young children need more of for good health. They are evaporated milk, corn syrup, nonfat dry milk, canned meat or poultry, fruit juice, canned fruits and vegetables, scrambled egg mix, iron fortified farina, instant potatoes, and peanut butter.

A person may be able to get Foods For Health if they are getting free or almost free medical care or are taking part in:

- The Food Stamp Program
- Commodity Distribution Program
- Office of Economic Opportunity's Comprehensive Health Services
- Children's Bureau's Maternity and Infant Care Projects
- Division of Indian Health's Free Medical and Health Care Programs
- State and local Welfare Programs
- Other programs for which eligibility is based on economic need for health care or food

If they need more food, a doctor, public health nurse, social worker, nutritionist, or other staff member must identify the need and give them an authorization for food.

The individual needing food help should be referred to the local health clinic or center where the Program is in operation. When she gets an authorization for food it can be filled at the clinic or center—or it may be taken to the nearest distribution point in the area.

Since this is a recent addition to USDA's food help program, the people in your area may not know about it yet. You might want to talk to your local health department about the Supplemental Food Program.

Local health officials can get in touch with the nutrition division of their State Health Department to ask for help in setting up the Program. The State official who runs the USDA donated foods program in the State should also be told. To find out the names of the State officials you need to get in touch with and to get more information about USDA's Supplemental Food Program, write to the Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office nearest you. Addresses are inside back cover.

Resource Materials

There are many good sources of material for use in community educational programs starting with the District offices. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has developed publications, posters, slide series, motion pictures, and exhibits on a variety of subjects. Some of these are designed to help explain the food programs to local leaders and to families who might be eligible for food help; and others are developed for nutrition and consumer education programs. Here is a list of catalogues of USDA materials and how to get them:

- C&MS-53 — AVAILABLE PUBLICATIONS of USDA's Consumer and Marketing Service. Address your request to the Information Division, Consumer and Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

- List No. 5 — POPULAR PUBLICATIONS for the Farmer, Suburbanite, Homemaker, Consumer. Address your request to the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

- MP-1107 — COLOR FILMSTRIPS AND SLIDE SETS of the United States Department of Agriculture. Address your request to Photography Division, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

- AH-14 — MOTION PICTURES of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Address your request to the Motion Picture Service, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

To get information on USDA exhibits, write to the Chief of the Exhibit Service, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Also, there is a comprehensive Bibliography of Consumer Education materials available through the President's Committee on Consumer Interests, Washington, D.C. 20506.

Other good sources of material in your area include the County Extension Office, and your State Land-Grant College or University (which has the State office of the Extension Service).

For More Information

For more information on the Food Donation and Supplemental Food Programs you can contact the Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office nearest you.

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
26 Federal Plaza, Room 1611
New York, N.Y. 10007

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
1795 Peachtree Road, N.E., Room 302
Atlanta, Ga. 30309

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
536 South Clark Street
Chicago, Ill. 60605

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
500 South Ervay Street, Room 3-127
Dallas, Tex. 75201

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
Appraiser's Building, Room 734
630 Sansome Street
San Francisco, Calif. 94111

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